

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 15-24

Glenwood Cemetery
2219 Lincoln Road NE
Square 3505, Lot 802

Meeting Date: March 24, 2016
Applicant: Glenwood Cemetery Corporation
Affected ANC: 5E
Staff Reviewer: Anne Brockett

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board designate Glenwood Cemetery at 2219 Lincoln Road NE a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and forward the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for listing as a site of local importance with a Period of Significance of 1852-1966.

Design Significance

The 54.85 acre Glenwood Cemetery contains more than 48,000 burials in a landscaped setting, initially surrounded by farms and fields and today enveloped by rowhouse communities on the east and west, St. Mary's and Prospect Hill Cemeteries to the south, and Trinity Washington University to the north.

Its picturesque landscape, with curving roads and carefully placed trees and shrubs, frame a diverse collection of grave markers, statuary, buildings, mausolea, and other memorials. Continuously active since sitework commenced in 1852, the cemetery embodies stylistic interpretations of the three major cemetery design movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Rural, Lawn Park, and Memorial Park Movements.

At the time of Glenwood's establishment in 1852, the nation was undergoing extraordinary growth in its cities. Coupled with extreme overcrowding in existing burial grounds and ongoing concerns about contagion, municipalities began prohibiting burials within proximity to the urban core. This decision resulted in the birth of the Rural Cemetery movement and the relocation of most urban family and churchyard burials to the new Rural cemeteries outside the city, simultaneously solving the problems of overcrowding and disease and opening up valuable land for development. Following this trend, the District of Columbia banned new burial grounds within the original city limits in 1852.

Glenwood Cemetery was laid out by engineer Georges de la Roche, who had recently completed designs for Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown. At Glenwood, he successfully incorporated the principles of the Rural Cemetery Movement, including a location well outside the urban core, an engineered topography to create hills, valleys, and vistas, a serpentine carriageway leading through the grounds to significant overlooks, and carefully laid out burial sections and plots that followed the curving roads. Monuments from this era emphasize the vertical and include numerous sentimental emblems and epithets.

In 1900, the developed portion of the cemetery was expanded to the north with a plan that introduced the Lawn Park aesthetic at Glenwood. Created in the middle of the century, the Lawn Park Movement encouraged a more open plan, one that restricted the use of ornamental shrubs in favor of the selective use of trees. The Movement opened up the gothic setting of the Rural Cemeteries to a more romantic, less individualistic regard for beauty and death. At Glenwood, the Lawn Park tenets are manifested in the retention of a flatter, less contrived topography, a more open landscape arranged around the central Lincoln Circle, and the placement of burial markers in regular rows, rather than angled to follow the curves of the roadway. Monuments initially became more substantial and less symbolic, with the family name being the most prominent design aspect. This trend then developed into more moderately-sized family markers with smaller markers for the individual family members.

The sections that were the last to be improved demonstrate a reliance on the Memorial Park Movement, which gained in popularity throughout the 20th century. This movement is most clearly identified through an open and grassy landscape, devoid of plantings and large markers. Simple flat markers remove the overbearing reminders of death and allow for the bucolic surroundings found in Glenwood's northernmost sections.

In addition to its many beautiful markers and individually significant family mausolea, Glenwood contains such notable features as the 1892 Chapel, which was designed by Glenn Brown and previously listed in the National Register; the Main Gate, constructed in 1898 with its wrought-iron filigree archway; the 1854 Public Mausoleum built in an amalgam of the Classical and Egyptian Revival styles; and the Gatekeeper's Lodge, designed by Freyhold and Walsh in 1899.

Historic Background

Glenwood Cemetery was conceived of by William Humphreys of New York, who purchased a farm outside the city of Washington in April 1852 (two months prior to the District's prohibition of new burial grounds within the city) for the express purpose of establishing a burial ground. Humphreys retained engineer Georges de la Roche to design the grounds using Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery as a model. He brought his brother-in-law George Clendenin to Washington as the cemetery's first Superintendent.

Notably, Glenwood was developed as a commercial entity without religious, civic, or organizational ties. When the cemetery was chartered by Congress, it was as an income-earning business, the first use of a for-profit cemetery in Washington, D.C. and a very early example in the United States. This business model, which was initially regarded with some disdain as disrespectful toward the deceased, was to become the prototype for virtually all cemeteries of the later 19th century through the present.

However, as a role model, Glenwood was not without its tribulations. As documented in the landmark nomination, Glenwood faced a number of lawsuits, counter lawsuits, claims of ownership, threats of eminent domain, and the like in its earlier years. Dubbed "The Battle-Ground of the Dead" in an 1878 *Washington Post* article, several cases involving the management of the cemetery and disposition of its funds reached the Supreme Court. After a corporation of lot holders was firmly established by the court to run it, the cemetery successfully fought off several attempts to appropriate its lands and run city streets through the property.

At the time of its establishment, existing cemeteries were most often affiliated with a religious institution. When Glenwood was founded, it was Christian, but otherwise non-denominational, a novelty at the time. However, the cemetery was less welcoming to persons of color, officially restricting the proprietors from allowing individuals of African descent from being buried at the cemetery. Despite this official ban, records indicated that African American burials were taking place here as early as 1900.

Notable burials include Amos Kendall, the founder of Gallaudet University, who was interred at Glenwood in 1869; Clark Mills, one of America's most accomplished sculptors, whose oeuvre includes the statue *Freedom* atop the Capitol dome; artist Constantino Brumidi, best known for his extraordinary fresco work in the U.S. Capitol building, including *The Apotheosis of Washington*; and Emmanuel Gottlieb Leutze, painter of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.

Evaluation

During its 160 years of history as a Congressionally chartered for-profit cemetery, through protracted legal battles over finances and ownership, and despite clashes with the District Commissioners to protect the land from incursion, Glenwood Cemetery has retained its original layout, while accommodating evolving attitudes toward cemetery design. Noted throughout its history for its beautiful setting, the cemetery has become the resting place for many of the District's prominent residents, memorialized with important works of public art.

The site retains its integrity and is an excellent example of the development of the American cemetery both stylistically and commercially. Glenwood Cemetery meets D.C. Designation Criteria B and National Register Criterion A (history) as a physical reflection of society's evolving views on death as demonstrated through design and as being the first for-profit cemetery established in the city.

It also meets D.C. Criteria D and E and National Register Criterion C (architecture, design, artistry) an intact collection of significant landscape architecture, architecture, and funerary art adapted to a cemetery that transcends multiple periods of design and nationally recognized movements and styles. Notable examples of funerary art and architecture such as obelisks, mausolea, sculptural memorials, and monolithic family markers can be found throughout the grounds.

The cemetery meets DC and National Register Criterion D (archaeology) for both historic and prehistoric archaeological potential. Although the property has not been surveyed for archaeological resources, potentially significant sites may be present that are likely to yield information important in history or prehistory. The upland setting may have been attractive to American Indians for camps or special use sites. It is known to have been farmland as early as 1809, and there may be undocumented historic uses or occupations, such as by slaves or tenants. Unmarked graves, especially from reinterments, are also highly likely and there may be undocumented clandestine burials on the margins, as well.

The Cemetery meets National Register Criterion Consideration D (burial places) as a cemetery that contains the graves of important individuals; that reflects the development of Washington D.C., and as a cemetery that embodies the principles of the three major movements in cemetery design.

The Period of Significance extends from the initial planning and sitework in 1852 through 50 years from the present, or 1966.